

Obituary

Francis Gloster Forman 1904-1980

Francis Gloster Forman, known to everyone as Frank Forman, passed away on 5 September 1980. He was a true Western Australian having been born at Claremont on 28 December 1904. He was educated at Scotch College and went on to the University of Western Australia (then housed in tin sheds in Irwin Street) majoring in geology. He was active in student affairs being a very good rower, swimmer and good shot in the University Rifle Club. In the citizen forces he gained commissioned rank.

After graduation he started work in Papua and then visited the United States of America touring the oilfields. In 1929 he returned to Western Australia to join the Geological Survey and to spend the rest of his working career based in Perth.

This was a period of the Geological Survey's history when there were only 2 to 4 geologists on the staff and each was required to handle any type of investigation. Initially Frank examined the oil prospects of the Fitzroy Trough but his later responsibilities included gold, underground water, coal, tin, copper and feldspar. His numerous reports are recorded in the Geological Survey's publications and in the Journal of Royal Society Volume 23 where his Presidential Address dealt with the "Precambrian succession in Western Australia".

In the early thirties during a field trip in the Carnarvon Basin, Frank was dislodged from a camel. This left him with partial paralysis in one side and, in particular, one leg. It was not discovered until years later that he had actually a fracture in the neck. Despite numerous operations, his leg did not recover and this hampered movement for the rest of his life and in latter years confined him to a wheel chair. He was never heard to complain of his disability and retained his smiling jovial personality. He did not want sympathy and insisted on handling his collapsible wheel chair as he slid himself in and out of his car. In one of his investigations in later years he insisted on going underground down a narrow low adit and arranged for a stretcher to be made to carry him down.

In June 1934 he was appointed Government Geologist and with new staff initiated the regional and detailed examination of the Yilgarn and Mt Margaret Goldfields, with particular reference to gold. He was a member of the committee supervising the Aerial,

Geological and Geophysical Survey of Northern Australia, which operated in the Pilbara and Kimberley. In 1938 he was granted leave for 16 months to accept a Commonwealth Fund Service Fellowship tenable at the Geology Department, Harvard University.

During the war years he was associated mainly with the search for strategic minerals until he resigned in August 1945 to join Australian Mines Management and Secretariat Ltd, Perth. It was said at the time that Frank Forman "takes with him to the mining industry a wide knowledge of the mineral deposits of this State". He later joined Berwick Moreing & Co., and in the early fifties became a private consultant.

During his remaining years he consulted for numerous companies and was responsible, in association with a syndicate, for identifying the value of the mineral sand deposits near Capel and pegging the claims which later formed Western Titanium NL. He used a geiger counter to trace the deposits which contain monazite.

He served as a member of many organisations at various times such as Australian National Research Council, Chamber of Mines and others. Perhaps his best record of service was with the Royal Society of Western Australia. He was elected a member in 1927 and an Honorary Member in 1973. His offices include: Councillor (1934-35, 1939-43), Joint Honorary Secretary (1930-34), Vice President (1935-36), President (1936-37), Past President (1937-38) and Treasurer (1944-45).

Frank was a geologist who covered all facets of his profession but in particular economic minerals. He was a true field geologist being dedicated to his profession, and was a very observant person with a keen eye and love of native plants, flowers and birds. The eucalypt *E. formani* C. A. Gardner, and the tantalum mineral formanite, were both named in his honour. Frank endeared himself to everyone with his friendly, kind and likeable manner and was respected by all. Even in his later years, when confined to a wheel chair he still loved to attend "Sundowners" to talk and exchange ideas with other geologists both young and old.

Frank is survived by a widow, two sons, and a daughter, to whom we extend our condolences.

J.H.L.